



Synthesis of hierarchical bismuth-rich $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions for enhanced photocatalytic activities of CO_2 conversion and Cr(VI) reduction under visible light



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ABSTRACT

Bismuth oxyhalides (BiOX , $X = \text{Br}, \text{I}$) photocatalysts are rarely applied for photocatalytic reduction reaction with the photo-induced electron, as this is impeded by their low conduction band. As a widely used approach for enhancing the photocatalytic reduction activity, bismuth-rich strategy results the bismuth content of BiOX photocatalysts increasing. In this paper, a solid solutions of bismuth-rich $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ were prepared applying the molecular precursor method. $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ were characterized by X-ray diffraction (XRD), field emission scanning electron microscopy (FESEM), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), element mapping, Brunauer–Emmett–Teller surface analysis (BET), UV–vis diffuse reflectance spectroscopy (DRS), and X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS). The obtained photocatalytic data showed that $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions had higher photocatalytic activities than $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$ and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$. At an optimal ratio of $x = 1$, the $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ photocatalyst showed the highest photocatalytic reduction activity for CO_2 conversion ($22.85 \mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$ CO generation, AQE was 0.372 at 400 nm) and Cr(VI) removal (88%). CO_2 adsorption data and CO_2 temperature programmed desorption (CO_2 -TPD) revealed that $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ exhibited the highest chemical adsorption ability of CO_2 molecules. Photocurrent and electrochemical impedance (EIS) spectroscopy demonstrated the enhanced photo-induced carrier separation efficiency of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$. These mechanistic studies suggest that $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions are excellent photocatalysts for solar fuel generation and environmental remediation.

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1. Introduction

Energy and environmental resources are the most critical factors for human livelihood. Therefore, worldwide research focuses more and more on new technologies for developing new means of energy generation and environmental remediation. Recently, photocatalysis technology displayed great prospects for environmental remediation and solar fuel generation [1–5]. Photocatalysis technology uses semiconductor nanomaterials to decompose toxic pollutants, convert carbon dioxide (CO_2), and split water under solar light irradiation. For example, oxide-based (TiO_2 [6], ZnO [7],

SnO_2 [8]), sulfide-based (CdS [9], ZnS [10], SnS [11]), silver-based (AgX ($X = \text{Cl}, \text{Br}, \text{I}$) [12,13], Ag_3PO_4 [14], Ag_2CrO_4 [15]), and bismuth-based semiconductors (Bi_2MoO_6 [16], BiVO_4 [17], BiOX ($X = \text{Cl}, \text{Br}, \text{I}$) [18,19], $\text{Bi}_2\text{O}_2\text{CO}_3$ [20]) were used for photocatalysis. However, most oxides cannot absorb visible light [21,22]; sulfide- and silver-based semiconductors are unstable due to the leak of ion under light irradiation [23,24]; and bismuth-based semiconductors were rarely used for solar fuel generation due to their low photocatalytic reduction activity [25–27]. Among the above three types of photocatalysts, bismuth-based semiconductors of the type BiOX were suggested to be most promising due their unique layered structure [25–27], and more and more few-layer BiOX nanosheets are applied for photocatalytic reduction in solar fuel generation [28–30].

In order to enhance the photocatalytic reduction activity of BiOX semiconductors more effectively, the bismuth content of BiOX was increased. This bismuth-rich strategy exploits that the

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conduction band (CB) potential can be altered by changing the bismuth content, as the CB of BiOX is mainly determined by the Bi 6p state [31–33]. Depending on the respective bismuth content, different bismuth-rich BiOX photocatalysts may display different photocatalytic reduction activities. For example, Bi₂₄O₃₁Br₁₀ can photoreduce Cr(VI) [34], Bi₃O₄Br, Bi₅O₇X (X = Br and I), and Bi₂₄O₃₁Cl₁₀ can effectively activate molecular oxygen [35–38], and Bi₃O₄Cl and Bi₁₂O₁₇Cl₂ exhibit efficient photocatalytic reduction activities for H₂ generation under visible light [39,40]. Recently, our group synthesized Bi₄O₅X₂ (X = Br and I) photocatalysts applying the molecular precursor method [41–43]. These photocatalysts showed high photocatalytic reduction activities for CO₂ conversion. Furthermore, we improved the activity of bismuth-rich BiOX photocatalysts (Bi_xO_yX_z) by performing coupling, using a co-catalyst and applying doping [43–46]. However, no solid solution of bismuth-rich BiOX has been reported so far. At present, the different bismuth-rich Bi_xO_yX_z with same atom ratio and different halogen are obtained by the hydrothermal process at different pH values [47–49]. However, the non-uniform synthesis conditions of this approach cause difficulties in the synthesis of solid solutions of bismuth-rich BiOX.

In this paper, solid solutions of bismuth-rich Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} were prepared via the molecular precursor method based on our previous work, and their enhanced photocatalytic mechanism was discussed in detail [42,43]. To the best of our knowledge, no solid solution of Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} photocatalysts has been reported to date. At an optimal ratio of $x = 1$, Bi₄O₅BrI showed the highest photocatalytic reduction activity for CO₂ conversion (22.85 $\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$ CO generation) and Cr(VI) removal (88%).

2. Experimental section

2.1. Materials

Bi(NO₃)₃·5H₂O, KBr, KI, glycerol, and ethanol were purchased from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co., Ltd. (Shanghai, China). These reagents were of analytical grade and were used without further purification.

2.2. Synthesis

2.2.1. Complex precursor

Each of the reagents KX (X = Br or/and I; 2 mmol) and Bi(NO₃)₃·5H₂O (2 mmol) was dissolved in 20 mL glycerol. Then, the KX solution was added dropwise to the Bi(NO₃)₃·5H₂O solution while stirring continuously. The resulting suspension was transferred into Teflon-lined stainless steel autoclaves (50 mL) and kept at 160 °C for 16 h. After the reaction was completed, the formed complex precursor precipitate was obtained by centrifugation and

$$\text{AQE (\%)} = \frac{N_{\text{Solar fuels}}}{N_p} = \frac{2 \times \text{number of CO molecules} + 8 \times \text{number of CH}_4 \text{ molecules}}{\text{the number of incident photons}} \times 100\%$$

$$= \frac{2 \times N_a \times (M_{\text{CO}} + M_{\text{CH}_4})}{\frac{P_{\text{st}} \lambda}{hc}}$$

then washed with ethanol. Finally, the obtained complex precursor was dried at 80 °C under air atmosphere.

2.3. Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x}

Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} compounds were synthesized by a simple hydrolytic process from an aqueous solution of their complex precursor molecules (0.3 g in 100 mL deionized water). The obtained Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} compounds were washed successively with deionized water and finally dried at 80 °C.

2.4. Characterization

X-Ray diffraction patterns (XRD) of the samples were recorded at room temperature with a Bruker D8 advance X-ray diffractometer using Cu K α radiation and a 2 θ scan rate of 6 min⁻¹. Diffraction patterns were taken over an angular range of 2 θ = 5–70°. A Sigma Zeiss field-emission scanning electron microscope (FESEM) was used to take FESEM images, and a JEOL JEM-2100F (RH) field-emission electron microscope was used to take transmission electron microscopy (TEM) and high-resolution transmission electron microscopy (HRTEM) images. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were carried out with a Thermo Scientific ESCALAB 250XI X-ray photoelectron spectrometer (Al K α , 150 W, C1s 284.8 eV). UV–vis diffuse reflectance spectra (DRS) were obtained by UV–vis spectroscopy (Perkin Elmer, Lambda 650s, BaSO₄ as a reference). A Quantachrome Autosorb-iQ automated gas sorption system, operated at 77 K, was used to measure the Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) surface areas and CO₂ adsorption properties. CO₂ temperature programmed desorption (CO₂-TPD) was carried out on the instrument AutoChem II 2920 (Micrometrics). The CO₂-TPD curves were obtained by gradually increasing the temperature to 500 °C with a ramping rate of 1 °C min⁻¹.

2.5. Photocatalytic CO₂ conversion

Photocatalytic CO₂ conversion was carried out in an off-line system. The used reactor. In the first step, 50 mg photocatalyst were uniformly dispersed on a glass sheet (about 25 cm² surface area). A mixture of CO₂/H₂O vapor was produced by passing compressed high purity CO₂ gas (99.99%) through a water vaporizer. This CO₂/H₂O vapor served as reaction gas and was introduced into the reaction system for several times to remove air. The reactor was purged for 15 min with CO₂/H₂O vapor and subsequently irradiated with a 300 W high-pressure Xenon lamp (PLS-SXE300C, Beijing Perfectlight Technology Co., Ltd., Beijing, China.) equipped with a 400 nm filter. The photoreaction temperature was maintained at 15 °C with a DC-0506 low-temperature thermostat bath (Shanghai Sunny Hengping Scientific Instrument Co., Ltd., Shanghai, China). 1 mL of gas was taken from the reaction cell at each time interval for qualitative analysis using an Agilent 7890 gas chromatograph equipped with a flame ionization detector (FID, Porapak N80/100 columns) and a thermal conductivity detector (TCD, Mole-Sieve 13 \times 60/80 columns). The production yield was quantified using a calibration curve. The outlet gases were determined to be mainly CO, CH₄, and small quantities of O₂ and H₂.

400 nm monochromatic light (400 nm band-pass filter, the illumination intensity of the light at the sample surface was 1.23 mW/cm²) was used to test the apparent quantum efficiency (AQE) by the following equation.

Where, $N_a = 6.02 \times 10^{23} \text{ mol}^{-1}$, $P = 1.23 \text{ mW/cm}^2$, $S = 25 \text{ cm}^2$, $t = 3600 \text{ s}$, $\lambda = 400 \times 10^{-9} \text{ m}$, $h = 6.626 \times 10^{-34} \text{ J s}$, and $c = 3 \times 10^8 \text{ m s}^{-1}$.

2.6. Photocatalytic Cr(VI) removal

Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} powders (20 mg) were added to the prepared Cr(VI) solution (50 mL, 60 mg L⁻¹ K₂Cr₂O₇) while stirring (about 30 min) to attain adsorption equilibrium. A 300 W high-pressure xenon lamp equipped with a 400 nm filter (PLS-SXE300C, Beijing Perfect

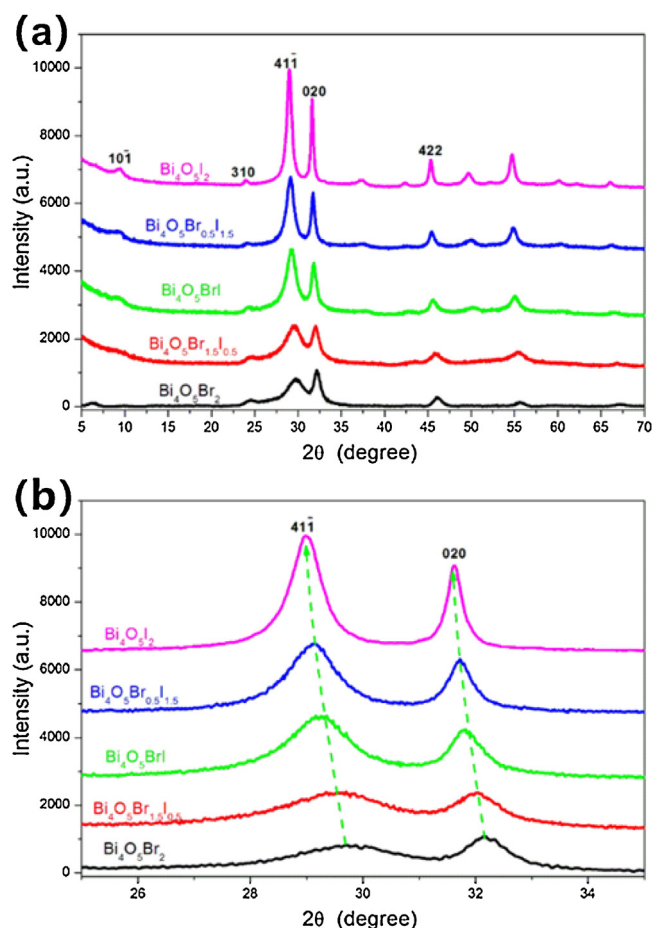


Fig. 1. XRD patterns of Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} ($x = 0, 0.5, 1, 1.5$, and 2): (a) 5° – 70° and (b) 25° – 35° .

light Technology Co., Ltd., Beijing, China) was used as light source. The suspensions were sampled (3 mL) at each given time interval and the samples were centrifuged to remove the powders. The concentration of K₂Cr₂O₇ was measured during the adsorption with a Lambda 650 s spectrophotometer.

2.7. Photoelectrochemical measurements

Mott–Schottky plots, transient photocurrent responses, and electrochemical impedance spectra (EIS) of the samples were recorded in a three-electrode quartz cell containing Na₂SO₄ (0.1 M) electrolyte solution and using a CHI660D electrochemical working station (CHI Instruments, Shanghai, China). Ag/AgCl and Pt were used as reference and counter electrodes, respectively. 15 μ L of Nafion®117 solution (5 wt%) and 5 mg of samples were dispersed in a 1 mL water/isopropanol mixed solvent (3:1 v/v) by sonication to form a homogeneous colloid. And then, 0.1 mL colloid was deposited onto the fluorine doped tin oxide (FTO) glass as the working electrode.

3. Results and discussion

Fig. 1 shows the XRD patterns of the as-prepared semiconductors Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅Br_{1.5}I_{0.5}, Bi₄O₅BrI, Bi₄O₅Br_{0.5}I_{1.5}, and Bi₄O₅I₂. All these compounds show similar monoclinic structures. For Bi₄O₅Br₂, the diffraction peaks were in agreement with the standard XRD pattern of PDF: 00-037-0699 (space group: P21, unit cell parameters: $a = 1.452$ nm, $b = 0.5625$ nm, and $c = 1.083$ nm, $\alpha = \gamma = 90.0^{\circ}$, $\beta = 97.6^{\circ}$) and also in accordance with previous work

[43]. For Bi₄O₅I₂, the diffraction peaks were in agreement with our results (space group: P21, unit cell parameters: $a = 1.494$ nm, $b = 0.5698$ nm, and $c = 1.126$ nm, $\alpha = \gamma = 90.0^{\circ}$, $\beta = 99.8^{\circ}$) [41,42]. The enlarged part of the XRD patterns (Fig. 1b) shows that the diffraction peaks significantly shift toward lower angles along with an increasing I[−] content of the semiconductor, owing to the smaller radius of Br[−] with respect to I[−]. This indicates that Bi₄O₅Br_{1.5}I_{0.5}, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅Br_{0.5}I_{1.5} are solid solutions rather than compounds intermediary between Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅I₂. On the other hand, Fig. 1b shows that the diffraction peaks' widths at half height increase from $x = 0$ to 2 , which is correlated to a decrease in the crystal size from $x = 0$ to 2 . A possibly related decrease in the surface area from $x = 0$ to 2 will be checked by Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) analysis.

The composition and chemical status of the samples were analyzed by X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), as shown in Fig. 2a. The relevant XPS peak position is calibrated against the C1s signal of contaminant carbon at a binding energy of 284.6 eV. The survey spectrum showed that only Bi, O, Br, and/or I were detected. This confirms the high purity of the Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅I₂, and Bi₄O₅BrI samples. The binding energies of the Bi 4f 7/2 and Bi 4f 5/2 peaks of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅I₂, and Bi₄O₅BrI (inset Table in Fig. 2b) suggest that these three samples contain Bi³⁺. The band energies of 630.81 eV and 619.34 eV attributed to I 3d 5/2 and I 3d 3/2 (Fig. 2c) and are associated with I[−] in Bi₄O₅BrI and Bi₄O₅I₂, respectively. The binding energies of Br 3d 5/2 and Br 3d 3/2 of Bi₄O₅BrI and Bi₄O₅Br₂, respectively, (inset Table in Fig. 2d) indicate the presence of Br[−] in Bi₄O₅BrI and Bi₄O₅Br₂. The atomic ratios (peak areas) of Bi:Br:I were 4:2:0, 4:0:2, and 4:1:1 for Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅I₂, and Bi₄O₅BrI, respectively. Those ratios were in agreement with their theoretical values.

Fig. 3 displays the morphology and element analysis of Bi₄O₅BrI. It was found that Bi₄O₅BrI solid solution exhibits a structure of hierarchical microspheres with diameters of about 2–5 μ m (Fig. 3a and c). The microspheres are assembled in ultrathin Bi₄O₅BrI nanosheets (Fig. 3b and d), which contain three layers and have a total thickness of 3 nm. The HRTEM image also shows clear lattice spacing of 0.942 and 0.283 nm. In our previous work [50], the crystalline interplanar spacing of 0.969 and 0.285 nm were indexed to the {101} and {020} facets of Bi₄O₅I₂, and the crystalline interplanar spacings of 0.918 and 0.281 nm were indexed to the {101} and {020} facets of Bi₄O₅Br₂. Comparison of these values shows that the crystalline interplanar spacing of Bi₄O₅BrI are between those of Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅I₂. Therefore, the Bi₄O₅BrI crystalline interplanar spacing of 0.942 and 0.283 nm were also indexed to the {101} and {020} facets of Bi₄O₅BrI, respectively. Scanning transmission electron microscopy (STEM) image (Fig. 3e) and the corresponding element mapping of Bi₄O₅BrI show clearly and uniformly distributed Bi, Br, and I elements.

N₂ adsorption–desorption isotherms and Barrett–Joyner–Halenda (BJH) pore size distribution curves of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅I₂, and Bi₄O₅BrI are shown in Fig. 4. Specific surface areas calculated from the linear parts of the multipoint plots of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ were 99.3, 79.2, and 49.9 m² g^{−1}, respectively, which are in agreement with the XRD analysis. The hysteresis loops were identified as type H3 loops. This indicates that the pores of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ are formed by non-rigid aggregates of plate-like particles [51], which has been confirmed by SEM and TEM images. The pore size distribution shows the existence of two different pore sizes. The first pore size was 3.7 nm for all above three samples. The second size was about 6 nm for Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅BrI (insertion of Fig. 4), which indicates that Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} solid solutions maintain their large surface areas and mesoporous structures.

In past two years, the CO₂ conversion in solar fuels over BiOCl, BiOBr, BiOI, Bi₅O₇I, Bi₄O₅Br₂, and Bi₄O₅I₂ was studied, as shown in

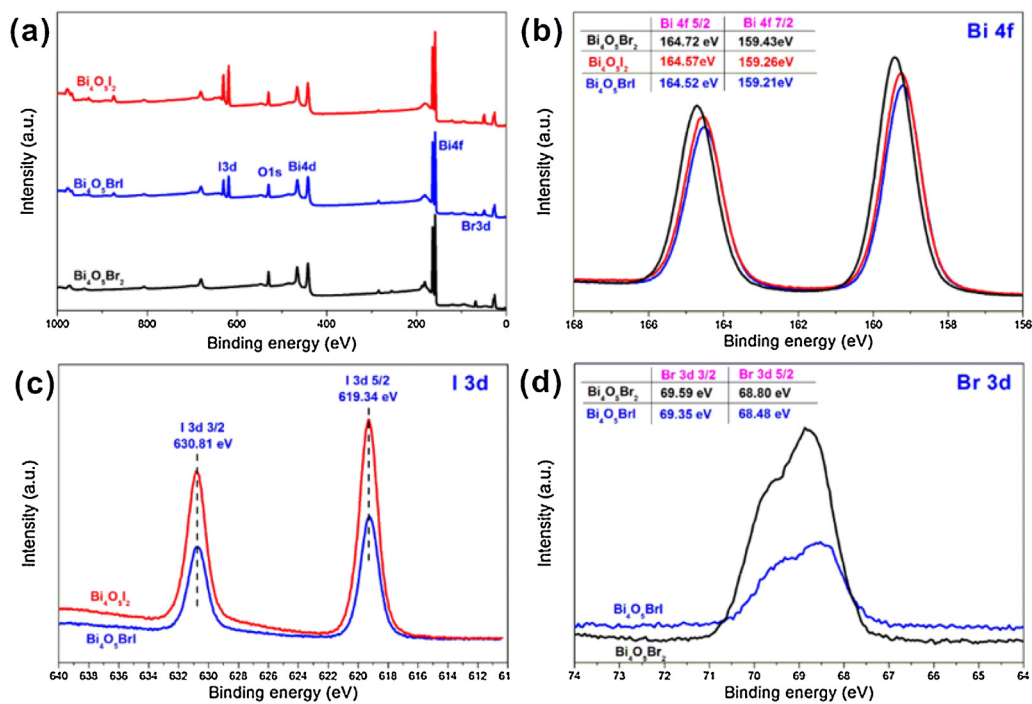


Fig. 2. XPS spectra of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂: (a) survey, (b) Bi 4f, (c) I 3d, and (d) Br 3d.

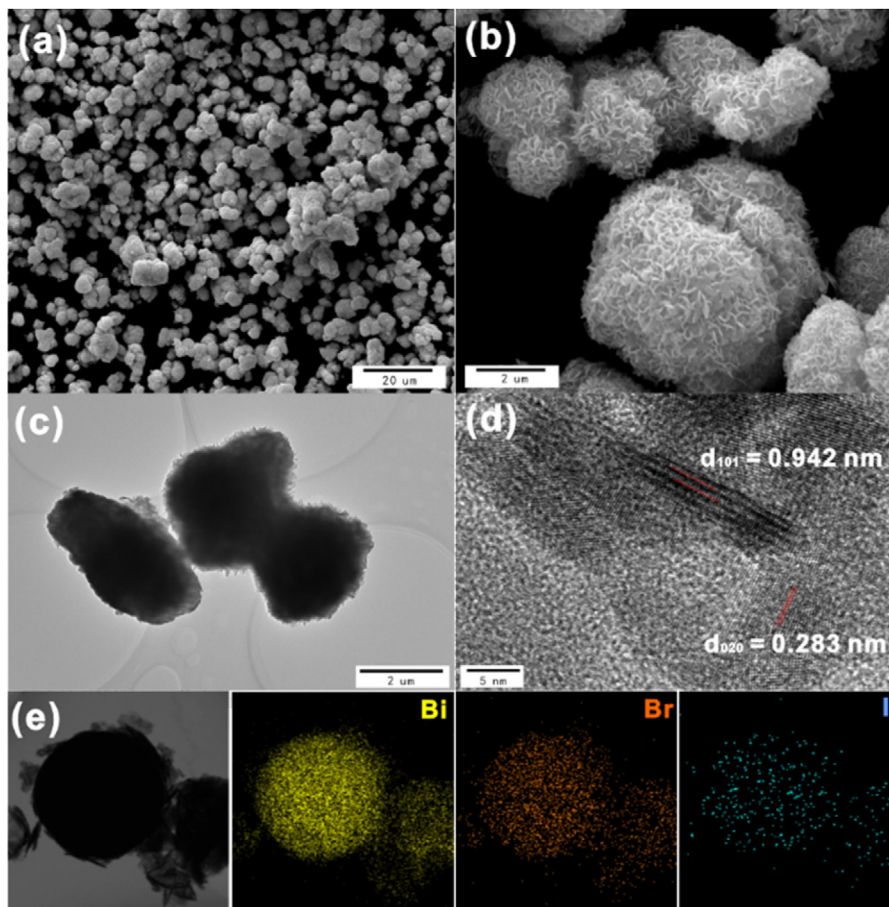


Fig. 3. (a) and (b) FESEM images, (c) TEM image, (d) HRTEM image, and (e) STEM images and the corresponding element mapping of Bi₄O₅BrI.

Table 1
Comparison of TiO_2 , g- C_3N_4 and BiOX-based photocatalysts for CO_2 conversion.

Photocatalysts	Light source	CO ($\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	CH_4 ($\mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$)	Refs.
TiO_2	300 W Xe lamp	NO	1.35	[52]
g- C_3N_4	300 W Xe lamp	1.97	1.94	[53]
BiOCl	500 W Xe lamp	1.01	0.15	[41]
BiOBr	300 W Xe lamp $\lambda > 400 \text{ nm}$	1.68	0.16	[43]
BiOI	300 W Xe lamp $\lambda > 420 \text{ nm}$	0.51	0.18	[29]
$\text{Bi}_5\text{O}_7\text{I}$	300 W Xe lamp $\lambda > 400 \text{ nm}$	1.73	0.18	[42]
$\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$	300 W Xe lamp $\lambda > 400 \text{ nm}$	2.71	1.65	This work
$\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$	300 W Xe lamp $\lambda > 400 \text{ nm}$	15.87	0.18	
$\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$	300 W Xe lamp $\lambda > 400 \text{ nm}$	22.85	2.13	

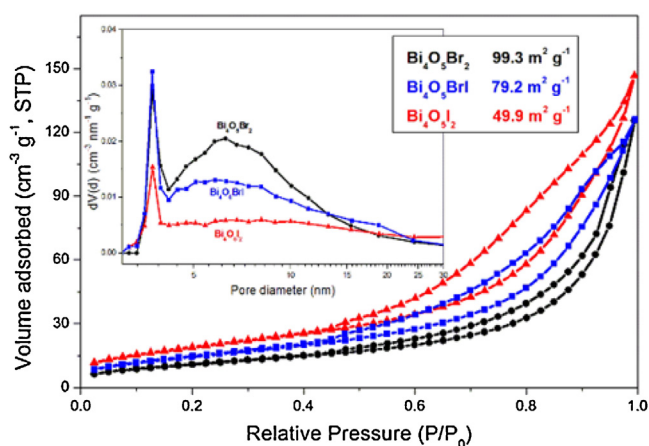


Fig. 4. N_2 adsorption-desorption isotherms and BJH pore size distribution curves (insertion) of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$, $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$, and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$.

Table 1 [29,41–43]. We found that $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$ and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$ display better activities for photocatalytic CO_2 conversion with visible light radiation. In this work, we expected to find an enhanced activity for $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions. Fig. 5 shows the photocatalytic rates of products of CO_2 conversion over $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ ($x = 0, 0.5, 1, 1.5$, and 2) solid solutions under visible light irradiation for 1 h. It exhibits that CO and CH_4 were generated during the photocatalytic CO_2 conversion, and CO was the main product. The best photocatalyst was $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ with a photocatalytic rate of $22.85 \mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$, which was about 8.4 times larger than that of pure $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$ ($2.71 \mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$) and 1.4 times larger than that of pure $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$ ($15.87 \mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$). And at 400 nm monochromatic light irradiation, Fig. 5b showed the apparent quantum efficiency (AQE) of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ reached 0.372%. It was about 3.65 and 2.72 time of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$ (0.102%) and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$ (0.137%), respectively. Fig. 5c and d display the photocatalytic yields of CO and CH_4 , respectively, under visible light irradiation for different times. They reveal that the total yields of CO and CH_4 increased with the irradiation time, whereas the yields decreased due to the possible pressure change. The cyclic experiment (Fig. 5d) revealed that the photocatalytic activity of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ decreased about 8% within five cycles (4 h

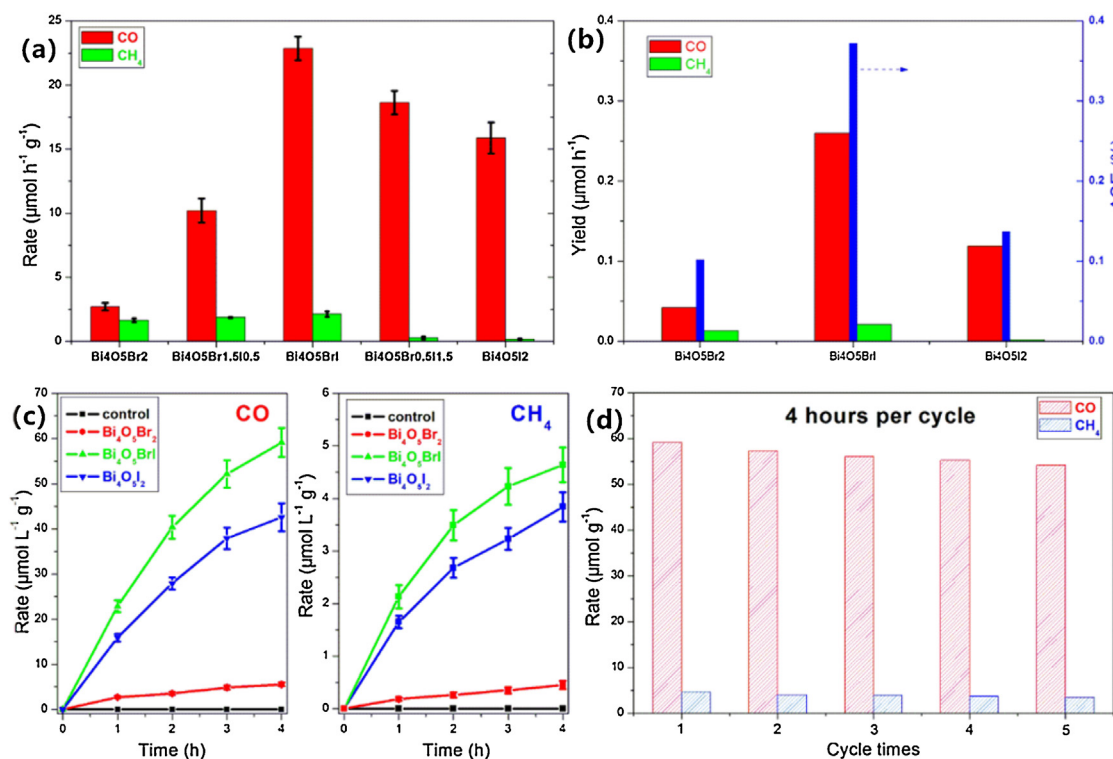


Fig. 5. (a) Rates of products for $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ ($x = 0, 0.5, 1, 1.5$, and 2) under visible light irradiation for 1 h; (b) apparent quantum efficiency and gas yield of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$, $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$, and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$ under 400 nm monochromatic light irradiation, yields of (c) CO and CH_4 over $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$, $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$, and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$ under visible light irradiation for different times, and (d) cyclic experiment over $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ under visible light irradiation for 4 h per circulation.

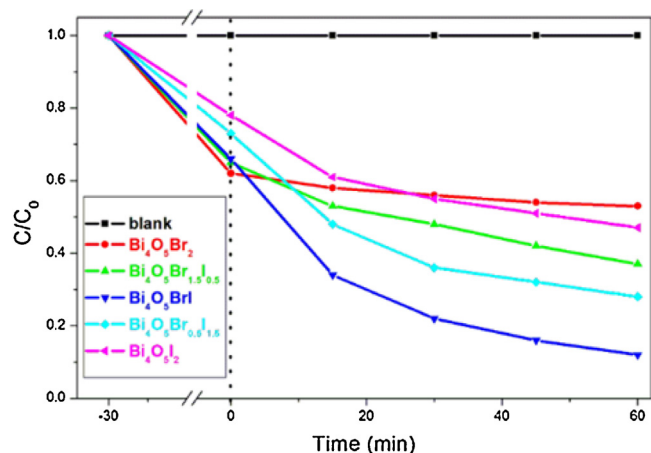


Fig. 6. Photocatalytic activities of Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} (x=0, 0.5, 1, 1.5, and 2) for Cr(VI) removal under visible light.

per cycle). However, the photocatalytic rate of the fifth cycle of Bi₄O₅BrI (54.2 μmol g⁻¹) was still higher than that of Bi₄O₅I₂ (42.5 μmol g⁻¹) and Bi₄O₅Br₂ (5.5 μmol g⁻¹). On the other hand, the XRD patterns of Bi₄O₅BrI before and after photocatalytic cycle tests also proved the stabilization of Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} solid solutions.

Besides the photocatalytic CO₂ reduction in the gaseous phase, we evaluated the photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction activity in the liquid phase (Fig. 6). Control experiments with absence of photocatalysts did not show any changes under visible light. The evaluation of the photocatalytic Cr(VI) reduction activity in the liquid phase revealed that after 30 min adsorption and 60 min visible light irradiation, the Cr(VI) removal ratios were 47, 63, 88, 72, and 53% for Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅Br_{1.5}I_{0.5}, Bi₄O₅BrI, Bi₄O₅Br_{0.5}I_{1.5}, and Bi₄O₅I₂, respectively. This indicates that Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} solid solutions show higher photocatalytic reduction activities than Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅I₂ for Cr(VI) removal with an optimal activity for x = 1. This implies that the solid solution strategy is a practical approach for enhancing the photocatalytic activity of bismuth-rich BiOX photocatalysts.

The photocatalytic CO₂ conversion is intensely affected by substrate adsorption properties. In order to compare the interaction between CO₂ molecules and Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x}, we studied the CO₂ adsorption and CO₂ temperature programmed desorption (CO₂-TPD) profiles of Bi₄O₅I₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ (Fig. 7). As shown in Fig. 7a, Bi₄O₅BrI absorbs a much larger number of CO₂ molecules, although Bi₄O₅BrI has a smaller surface area than Bi₄O₅Br₂. This may be due to the different adsorption characteristics of N₂ and CO₂ on Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} surfaces. N₂ adsorption-desorption isotherms reflect the physical adsorption to evaluate the surface area of the material. For non-carbon Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} catalysts, CO₂ adsorption should reflect the chemical adsorption for an evaluation of the active site of the CO₂ reaction on the material [51]. CO₂-TPD confirmed that CO₂ adsorbed chemically on the Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} surface. As shown in Fig. 7b, only Bi₄O₅Br₂ released a few CO₂ molecules at a desorption temperature of less than 200 °C. This temperature range is attributed to physical adsorption and is in agreement with the BET data. When desorption temperature was larger than 200 °C (chemical adsorption range), we found that Bi₄O₅BrI released much more CO₂ than Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅I₂. This indicates that the solid solution strategy was an effective method to enhance the chemical adsorption of CO₂. However, the reason for this remains to be studied. It is important to stress that BET data (N₂ adsorption-desorption isotherm) cannot be used to arbitrarily evaluate substrate molecule adsorption abilities.

It has been proven that the CB position of photocatalysts determines the photocatalytic reduction activity of photo-induced

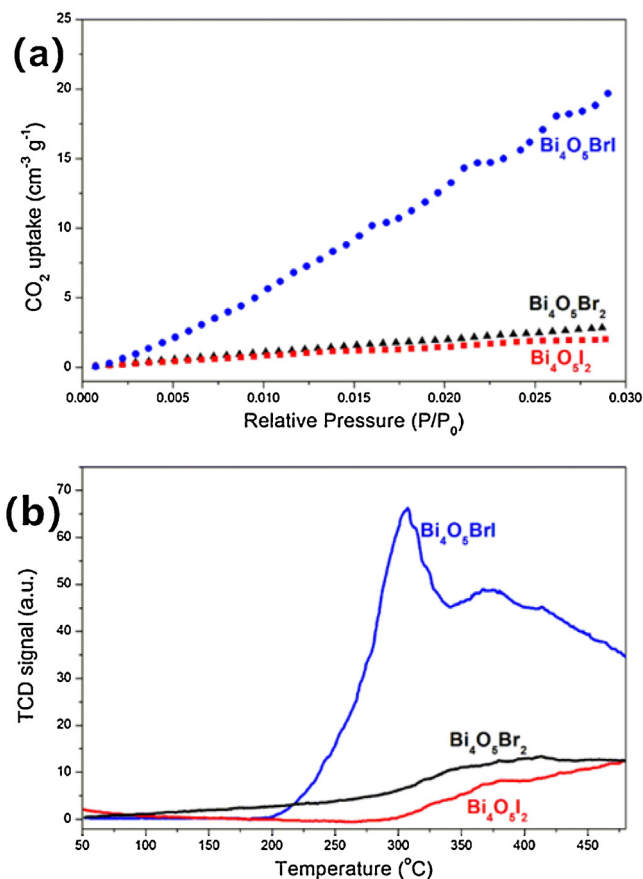


Fig. 7. (a) CO₂ adsorption and (b) CO₂-TPD profiles of Bi₄O₅I₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅Br₂.

electrons. Higher CB positions induced higher photocatalytic reduction activities. In order to compare the CB positions of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂, UV-vis diffuse reflectance spectra (DRS) and valence band XPS (VB XPS) spectra were recorded (Fig. 8). UV-vis diffuse absorption spectra (Fig. 8a) display that Bi₄O₅I₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅Br₂ absorb in the visible light. However, they displayed different absorption edges. The band-edge of optical absorption of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ were about 488, 531, and 569 nm, respectively. Based on the relationship $E_g = 1240/\lambda$ of band gap (E_g) and absorption edge (λ) [54,55], the band gap energies of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ were evaluated to be 2.45, 2.34, and 2.18 eV, respectively. The VB-XPS spectra displayed that the VB positions of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ were 1.48, 1.64, and 1.99 V (Fig. 8b), respectively. Based on the equation $E_g = E_{VB} - E_{CB}$, the CB positions of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ were calculated to be -0.55 and -0.70 V, respectively. Fig. 8c exhibits that the CB edges of Bi₄O₅BrI and Bi₄O₅I₂ are higher than that of Bi₄O₅Br₂, which results in higher photocatalytic activities for CO₂ conversion.

It is well known that the photocatalytic activity is usually affected by the photo-induced carrier separation efficiency. For proving this point for our samples, electrochemical impedance and photocurrent response spectra of Bi₄O₅Br₂, Bi₄O₅BrI, and Bi₄O₅I₂ were compared, as shown in Fig. 9. The photocurrent for Bi₄O₅BrI revealed to be much higher than those of Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅I₂ upon light irradiation (Fig. 9a). On the other hand, the diameter of the semicircle arc of Bi₄O₅BrI was smaller than those of Bi₄O₅Br₂ and Bi₄O₅I₂ (Fig. 9b), which indicates that Bi₄O₅Br_xI_{2-x} solid solutions have lower electron-transfer resistance values. Therefore, the mobility and separation efficiencies of the photo-induced carriers was efficaciously improved by using the solid solution strategy for Bi₄O₅X₂ (X = Br and I) photocatalysts.

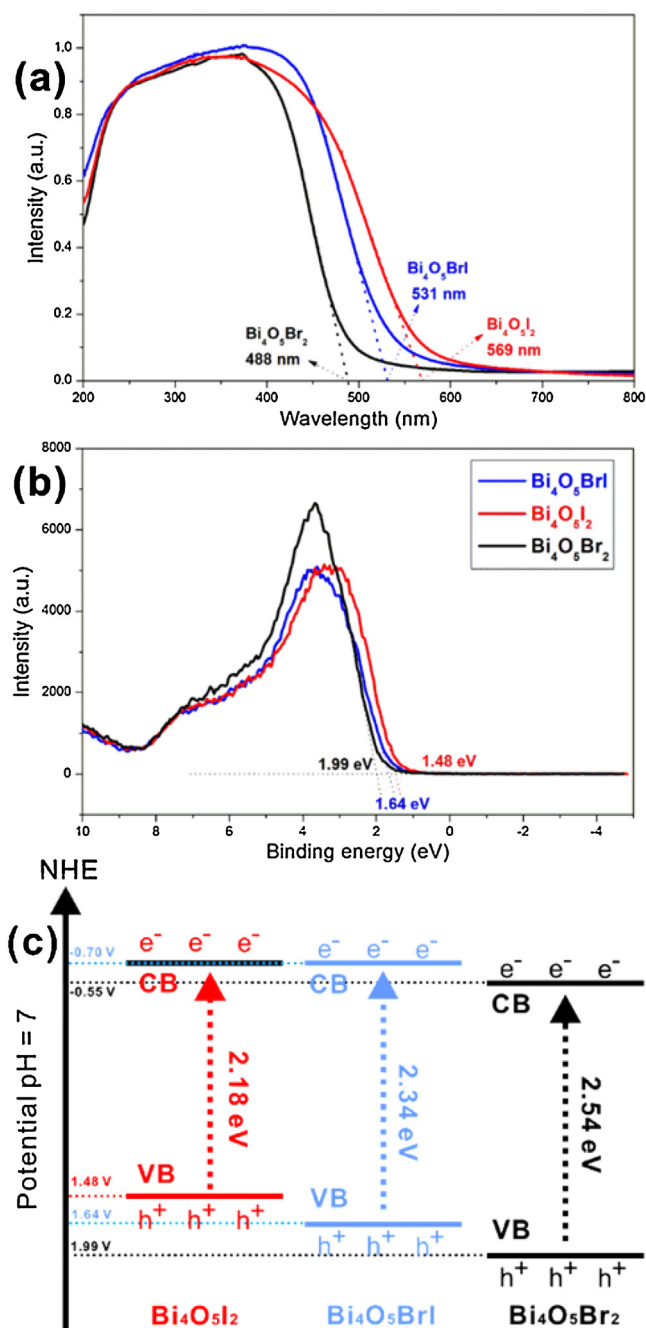


Fig. 8. (a) DRS and (b) valence band XPS spectra and (c) diagram of the band energies of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$, $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$, and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$.

4. Conclusion

In this work, hierarchical bismuth-rich $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions were prepared and characterized by XRD, FESEM, TEM, BET, and XPS. The photocatalytic reduction data for CO_2 conversion and Cr(VI) removal showed that $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ exhibit the highest photocatalytic reduction activity for an optimal ratio of $x=1$ with a CO production of $22.85 \mu\text{mol h}^{-1} \text{g}^{-1}$ and a Cr(VI) removal of 88% within 1 h. CO_2 adsorption data and CO_2 -TPD of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$ revealed the highest ability for capturing CO_2 molecules among the studied samples. Band energy structure analysis showed a high CB position for the reduction over $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions. Photocurrent and EIS revealed that $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions exhibit higher photo-induced carrier separation efficiencies than $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$

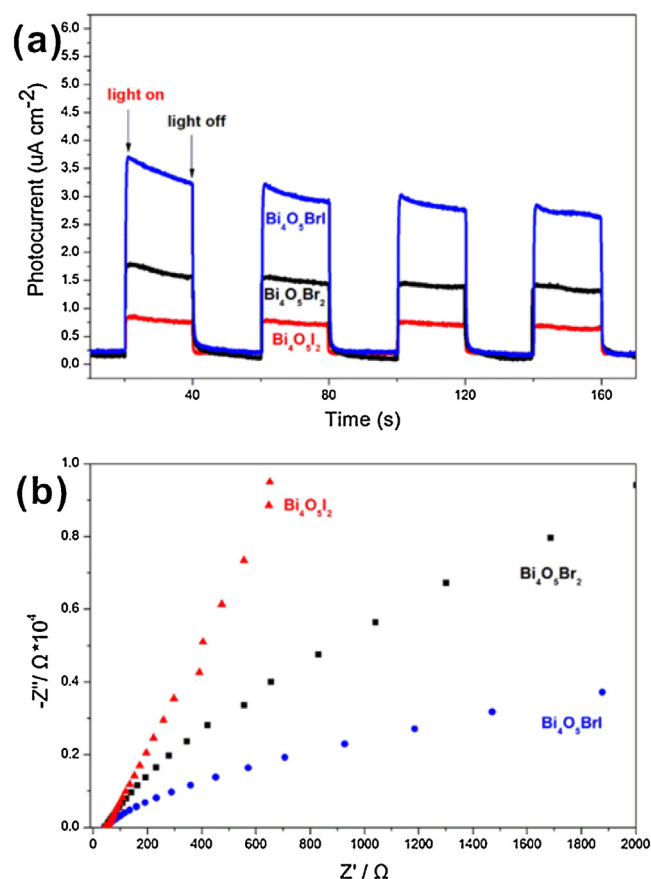


Fig. 9. (a) Electrochemical impedance and (b) photocurrent response spectra of $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$, $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{BrI}$, and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$.

and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$. Concluding, $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_x\text{I}_{2-x}$ solid solutions display higher photocatalytic reduction activities than $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{Br}_2$ and $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{I}_2$. More importantly, we report here for the first time the synthesis of bismuth-rich $\text{Bi}_4\text{O}_5\text{X}_2$ solid solutions. This significantly enlarges the scope of applications of solid solutions of bismuth-based photocatalytic materials from BiOX solid solutions to bismuth-rich BiOX solid solutions.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.apcatb.2016.10.066>.

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